

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Page 1, between Title and the first paragraph, insert the following new paragraph:

--CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a National Stage entry of International Application No. PCT/JP2004/008133, filed June 10, 2004. The disclosure of the prior application is hereby incorporated herein in its entirety by reference. –

After page 24, insert the Abstract of the Disclosure as follows:

-- ABSTRACT

A pulse voltage having a frequency of 15 kHz is applied from a discharging power supply unit (48) to between a crankshaft (12) and an electrode plate (45) at a current density of 2.5 mA/cm² to generate a glow discharge and an electric heater (34) is driven at a 40% output (64 kW/kg) to heat the crankshaft (12) to up to 400°C, and then heating is continued with the current density of a glow discharge set at 0.5 mA/cm² and the output of the electric heater (34) set at 90% (144 kW/kg), thereby effecting nitriding at a desired nitriding temperature.--